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Cycle Syncing Workout Guide

Welcome to Wholee Healthy's Cycle Syncing workout program!

I am so excited to bring you the workout I've been thriving with the past several months! The part I love best is that even *if you can only commit to 2 workouts a week, you'll still be making progress!*

That's right! I made this workout as 2 upper and 2 lower body workouts (& split it into 4 & 4). Even by getting in 1 upper and 1 lower workout a week, you'll still be hitting every major muscle group each week and making progress towards your goals (if you're doing the 8 day, shorter workouts, 4/week will hit all muscles). 4 days is ideal because working muscle groups 2x a week is optimal for muscle hypertrophy and strength development, but not a requirement to make progress. And remember, our body doesn't run on an exact 7 day schedule, so if your schedule works to get in 3, great! Just try to go in order upper, lower, upper, lower, etc, and you're good!

My Background

My name is Jess Kociemba, and I have a BS in health and physical education, and am in training to become a health coach. I also am on a personal, natural healing journey for PCOS, a hypothyroid, adrenal fatigue, and menstrual migraines. Throughout this journey, I've done endless hours of research on naturally balancing hormones, and have summarized a lot of my findings in my new book: [Women's Cyclical Health Guide](#), which is now available on Amazon, which you can buy via clicking on the book title or here: <https://a.co/d/hiKnaNU>!

Spoiler alert: I now have a regular cycle, my thyroid is back to normal, and I have just enjoyed my longest stretch of my adult life without a menstrual migraine.

In other words: there's definitely something to this cycle syncing stuff- this workout program included!

Why did I change up my workouts?!

I spent a few years as a Beachbody coach, doing the daily workout thing, losing weight through intense workouts, prolonged restriction, and drinking supplements to give me "false" energy. I still think there is some good to the workouts and there are some good things the company puts out there. However, these rituals I was doing: they flat out broke my body. And, now that I know better, I'm doing better. And I'm so happy you're joining me on this natural, self-nurturing journey to get stronger, fitter, and healthier!



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Who is this for?

My husband and I are both doing this, so it is beneficial for everyone. Cycling reps, lifting 1-2x/week per muscle group, and weight lifting are all beneficial to human beings in general... So don't shy away if you aren't cycling naturally or at all or let your significant other shy away if they are male!

What equipment do I need? (I've included Amazon links to most)

[Dumbbells](#)

[Resistance Bands](#)

[Wedges](#)

Bench

[Sliders](#)

[Step](#)

[Yoga Mat](#)

When should I lift?

Fit it into your schedule! 2, 3, or 4 days a week. Never lift 2 legs or 2 arms days back to back. I even hesitate to lift 3 days in a row because REST IS IMPORTANT! You will work against progress if you lift too often. With that said, if you have a crazy week and end up doing 3 days in a row just once, it is not the end of the world- just try not to make it a habit! Don't forget your Saturday and Sundays might be your best 2 lifting days. For many, these are the two days that they can get help with the kids and/or have a more flexible schedule. No matter what your schedule looks like, make sure to schedule your workouts at the beginning of each week and make it happen!

How long does this program last?

This program is designed for *at least* 8 weeks, I'd recommend going 12 weeks or more focusing on one program to start. It is beneficial for our bodies to learn moves, perfect them, and progressively overload/increase weight. This is the best way to build muscle- and yes, all of us can use more muscle... it is pure gold on our bodies. It increases metabolism, helps improve insulin sensitivity, improves our daily livelihood/ability, helps balance hormones, helps prevent injury, and burns fat at rest... it IS necessary and extremely beneficial to women!

Nutrition Recommendations:

If you want to build muscle, you need to lift and eat ENOUGH food. You cannot build muscle in a calorie deficit unless you haven't lifted or dieted in years... This is a rare circumstance, but not completely impossible. Otherwise, calculate your TDEE (total daily energy expenditure) via a Google search for "TDEE calculator" so you have an idea of how many calories you need to maintain weight. Start here and record your daily intake of food as well as your weight daily for the best results... your actual TDEE will most likely be slightly different than this, so track weight/food intake to be sure. **You want to also aim for grams of protein equivalent to your**



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body weight in pounds or a range of .7-1g/lb each day... This is imperative for muscle gain and retention. Women are often chronically undereating protein- so start counting protein above all else! This can also be one of the biggest game changers for satiety and adherence to a healthier diet. Because protein is one of the most satiating macros and will keep you full and prevent the desire to binge/overeat! When you've got that down or are looking to track more, aim for at least 40% carbs and 20-30% fat daily as well. Going below these numbers can affect your energy and menstrual cycle aka overall health.

That sounds like A LOT OF WORK! It can be at first! But, a small step (and maybe it's all you do) could be purposefully adding more protein into your diet!

Weight Loss:

Before beginning a weight loss journey, ask yourself if you are ready. I would recommend at least 6 months maintaining a consistent weight and consistently lifting weights before beginning to lose (consistently getting in the higher 1000s on your step count, sleeping at least 7 hours a night, & getting your stress in check consistently help as well). This will help you have more of a toned look when you do lose (because you'll have built muscle), as well as the ability to sustain your new weight once you do lose.

Start with a shorter cut of about 8-12 weeks, cutting calories by 10-20% and being flexible with both the length of the cut and the amount of calories cut, depending on weight fluctuations and energy. If there is a stall or you have cravings, feel restricted, have an abnormal cycle, aren't sleeping well, or are extremely fatigued or moody, it may indicate the need to stop. After this weight loss period, go back to your new maintenance, calculating TDEE with your new weight and adjusting as you track weight and food (you may need a different amount than recommended, so pay attention to these numbers).

It is expected that you will have some weight gain as you go back up to maintenance. You have more food in your belly, more carbs in glycogen stores, and more water retention as a result of both of these. This is NORMAL! Give yourself a minimum of 6 months (or double the length of your cut) at maintenance again before another cut.

**If you do have more weight to lose, you can cut for longer so long as your mental and physical feedback are still good. Just be sure to listen to your body and take breaks as needed!

Cycle Recommendations:

You will see throughout the program that Follicular and Ovulatory phases will have similar reps/sets as will Luteal and Menstrual. This is because in Follicular/Ovulatory, your hormones are either rising and/or higher and more supportive to heavier lifting. During Luteal/Menstrual your hormones are falling or at a low. If you are on birth control, understand that you are not ovulating, experiencing normal hormone fluctuations, or experiencing actual periods (the bleeding you experience is just a withdrawal bleed). You can absolutely still benefit from this



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program, just as males can, but just be aware of the differences you may be experiencing in your body vs someone cycling naturally.

I will have a recommendation for each phase; however, use your own judgment if you feel like you need to go lighter, feel you could do more reps or less at a heavier weight, or feel your equipment makes it difficult to follow the reps/sets scheme.

General Recommendations:

Menstrual Phase:

Days 1-3(or your heaviest/worst symptoms days) may be great days for rest, stretching, and walking, if you feel you can, try leaving more reps in reserve (RIR). For instance, you'll usually want to leave about 2 in reserve on your first sets and then 1 RIR on your last set. During this time, you may want to leave more like 3-4 RIR.

Days 4-7(or the last few day of your period when bleeding & symptoms slow) you may feel you can lower RIR again.

Cardio- walking is best for menstrual phase or LISS. You can up the incline on your treadmill slightly or do LISS(low intensity steady state) elliptical, but keeping the impact and heart rate lower is best for recovery, especially the first few days.

REST TIME: for upper body lifts, I'd recommend 1-2 minutes of rest between sets, for lower 2-3 minutes, making sure you feel recovered before going into the next set

Follicular/Ovulatory Phase

Return to the normal RIR. Listen to your body!

Cardio- intensity can gradually increase from LISS to HIIT-like activities, heart rate can get higher, duration can be longer; listen to your body so you don't overdo it! And make sure you are eating to support your activity: more activity= more calories. Keep more intense cardio days away from your leg lifts (aka not the day before, try the day after instead!). Make sure to eat calories to make up for your extra energy usage and are getting enough recovery in general as always. Too much cardio will cut into your muscle gains if you aren't supporting it with calories, especially carbs, and recovery/sleep/rest, so be sure not to overdo it!

*Some women do experience an energy decline right around ovulation, so this may be you! Adjust accordingly... it is most likely due to the energy our body is putting into releasing the egg, but could also have to do with hormonal imbalances or breakdown issues. Just a few more RIR if needed.

Luteal Phase

This phase can be an amazing phase for lifting heavy, so don't be afraid to still go strong, especially the first week. Consider capping shortening sessions, especially the second week or upping RIR or dropping a set. With RIR, as always, I encourage you to listen to your body!



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Cardio- ramp down the cardio gradually. The first week of Luteal you can do a bit longer and more intense, but low-impact LISS in the week before your period might be a better option. Shorter sessions may be beneficial as well.

If you want to keep it simple:

Late Menstrual/Follicular/Ovulatory/Early Luteal: 3x10, first 2 sets 2 RIR, last set 1 RIR
Late Luteal/Early Menstrual: 2x10, 2,2 RIR or 3x10 3,3,2 RIR

An Extra Note on Cardio: Cardio can look anything like 8-10k steps throughout your cycle and that's it or 3-5 sessions of LISS/HIIT (depending on phase) a week depending on where you are starting, your physical/hormonal health, your fitness goals, and your current fitness ability. Focusing on basic movement/steps is fine, especially if you are working out for the first time in awhile, really focusing on building muscle, or have a busier schedule. However, cardio is something you should definitely consider adding in 1-2x/week for at least 30 min as soon as you are able! It has so many benefits and shouldn't be ignored completely!

Soreness

Stay in tune with your body- lifting or doing cardio when you are already exhausted is a no go... your body is telling you to stop! You are lifting to supplement your life and to give you energy! If you feel like the opposite is happening, tone it back! A good rule of thumb is, it's okay to train a different muscle group if you're sore (training upper body with sore legs), but if a muscle group is still extremely sore, wait to train it again until it is recovered. Soreness does not necessarily indicate a good workout either, it can have a lot more to do with a new stimulus, dehydration, or a carb shortage. Some soreness is good and normal, but zero soreness or extreme soreness is usually a sign of not working hard enough, overdoing it, or not being properly fueled. As a whole, Train to live a better life, don't make training your life.

Lifting Style

There are some workouts that focus on cardio lifting and getting your heart rate up, some that want you to just focus on feeling a burn with super light weights, and others that say body weight is enough. But the truth? If you want to build muscle aka "get toned" and have a higher metabolism (and many more important health benefits), you need to *lift heavy weights*.

Heavy sounds... intense? But, heavy does not need to equate to injury, bulk, or manly. Heavy equals badassness. It equals health. It equals adding muscle aka gold to your body's frame. As a woman, **you will not bulk up!** If you do feel yourself getting "bigger" or maybe feel clothes fitting tighter over a period of a few months, that is okay! Because if you're eating in maintenance, that means you are adding beautiful muscle. Not happy with how you look? You can do a short fat-loss phase in a half year or year down the road, and those new muscles



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will pop, your metabolism will be higher, and your quality of life and health? It'll be phenomenal if you stick with it.

Still with me? Let's define lifting heavy a little more precisely: When you are using RIR (reps in reserve) you should feel like you could only do that many more reps more with the correct form. Example: 2 RIR=feeling like you can only do 2 more reps when you stop. 1 RIR: You feel you could only do 1 more rep with good form or until failure when you stop. Not sure what that feels like? Take it to form or absolute failure to test out what weights and reps you are capable of! You should feel like you are making the ugliest faces, possibly making noises, and getting red in the face. Embrace it!

And **record** it! This is one of the best feelings of a progressive overload program- watching yourself get stronger... and stronger. Now, since the reps and sets are changing, you may need to play around with the weights a little before you get it just right, but that's why we record it... and why we stick with the same program for a longer duration! The next time you're in the same phase, you'll know where to start, you'll have the mechanics down, and you'll be able to crush it!

Don't forget the importance of form either- if you're doing it wrong in order to up weights, you won't be building the muscle correctly. Go a little lighter to start, get it right, and then add on the weight! Please, please, please take the time to watch the form videos I made for you! And, if you're not sure? Record yourself and send me the video and I will give you tips on how to get it right!

Adaptations for limited equipment: If you are finding it difficult to get the intensity you need because you are limited on equipment, the first thing I want you to consider is: can I get equipment that will actually challenge me? If the answer is "no", then try these tactics:

- Do the movement with one leg or arm if needed (ex: single leg RDL vs both legs)
- Do more reps of the movement so you feel you're close to failure
- Pause at the most difficult point of the lift (ex: pausing at the top of hip thrusts)
- Slow the movement down to increase the time your muscle is under tension

In between sets? We're going for **recovery** from our lift before starting the next set or next exercise. I like to get my heart rate at least into the 120s before I start the next set and my breath is completely caught. We aren't going for cardio; we're going for muscle hypertrophy aka growth... which is really difficult to do, to be honest. But, if you follow the guidelines of **Heavy** (2 or less reps away from failure), **Recovery** (until you feel you'll be able to put in another set just as strong as the last), and **Record** (so you can start the next workout with the right weight), you'll be gaining slowly but surely in no time!

Recovery

Speaking of recovery, let's focus on it a little more. I have cardio recommendations, I've mentioned not lifting the same muscle group 2 days back to back... at least 48 hours in between sessions if not more. But, what else does recovery entail?



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Sleep

Sleep is key to muscle growth. If we don't get enough sleep, we won't be able to build muscle because the muscle fibers we're tearing down will not be able to rebuild as completely. Shoot for at least 8 hours. I know some say 7-8, but really go for 8+ if you can! If you have a tough night and it's a rarity, then you can usually keep going without too much of an issue. If you have a tough few days- week (think 6 hours or less/night-ish), take some time off of lifting until you catch up a little on sleep (at least two good nights of sleep in a row), make sure you're eating enough protein (1g/lb of body weight), and keep your steps going until your schedule returns to normal. Not getting enough sleep plus tearing down muscle fibers equals doubling up the stress.

Moderate the Movement

Yes, I have cardio recommendations, but honestly? As I mentioned before, too much cardio especially when stressed or undereating will cut into your recovery from lifting. That's why I love walking as a top form of cardio, aiming for 8-10k steps/day. I add in LISS 2-3x/week for 30-60 min usually right after a legs day to get out lactic acid and for heart health, but always allow 48+hours before I'll lift legs again. HIIT is something I'll include about 1x/week especially during my higher hormone phases (Late Menstrual-Late Luteal) in short sessions of boxing, running, or elliptical for heart health. If I have a stressful season, cardio is something I'll lighten up on, as it does drive cortisol higher than lifting.

So, as you're creating your own workout schedule and listening to your own body, take these things into consideration. Moving every day is great, but doing an intense workout every day is not sustainable unless you live a stress-free, calorie rich, sleep abundant lifestyle.

Stretch yoga, mobility, and stretching are always encouraged, but when you get into yoga sessions that tax your muscles, pilates, etc, you are working the muscle fibers that you should be allowing to recover, so think about this if you're engaging in these sorts of movements. Maybe you do a lower body yoga the day after a leg lift and then have 48 hours before your next leg lift- this is okay! But, for example, you have a lower body lift, upper body lift, and a rest day with a lower body lift scheduled for the next day, don't throw in a lower body yoga workout the day before you want to work those leg muscles hard again.

These lifts should be hard and working your muscles intensely. After you finish them, you shouldn't feel the need to do more! Remember, this workout is to help you maximize your life, not deplete you! Listen to your body to decide where the line between these two is!

Navigating Setbacks

Vacations, sleepless nights with kiddos, caring for a sick family member, etc... All of these circumstances and more will get us "off track". We need to prioritize our general health and the health of our loved ones above fitness. It's just reality sometimes. But, I invite you to take a



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new approach to how you see yourself. You are not a struggling woman who has so much on your plate...

You are a regular woman. All of us will deal with difficult circumstances at some point in life. That's right: every. single. one. of. us. Setbacks and struggles are a part of life. They *will* happen! But, I want you to also view yourself as an athlete. A lifter, runner, cycler, exercise enthusiast. A healthy individual. A person that takes care of yourself, loves yourself, and is a confident individual who knows self-care makes you a better, more capable individual- who is more able, in fact, to care for those around you when you are taking care of yourself. You are a person that will always go back to your healthiest routine of lifting when you are able. Not someone who *used* to lift. But, someone who, after the month of illness, the week of transitioning your daughter to a big girls bed, the fun two week vacation, will **ALWAYS** go back to lifting. You don't suddenly become a different person when you go through struggles. You don't become less worthy of health, less capable, or less in need of health.

Remember what feels good. Because the month? Week? 2 weeks? It is SO FREAKING SMALL in the grand scheme of your LIFELONG fitness journey. But quitting? Now *that* will make a lasting impact. Lifting, building muscle, and taking care of yourself is the norm. Weird or altered circumstances now and then are not. It matters what we do **CONSISTENTLY**, not occasionally.

Access

You can use the links from the downloaded PDF trackers I've made for you OR you can use this link to access the entire [Cycle Syncing Playlist](#)

Order

On the tracker, you will see a list of lifts for the day. I have them ordered from the largest muscle group to the smallest, so doing them in order is ideal; however if you are doing them at a gym and the weights you need aren't available, it's okay to mix up the order occasionally.

Accountability

Use the calendar for yourself to keep track of your workouts! You can also share them on social media and tag me @empowerher_healthcoaching for extra accountability. Or, just email them to me if that's the kind of accountability you are more comfortable with.

Conclusion

Listen to your body, lift heavy, drink water, eat enough food, eat good quality food, move often in your daily routine, recover, and take care of yourself!

I'm so excited to hear how you embrace this cycle syncing workout and make it your new lifestyle, so you can live in harmony with your hormones and body!

You got this!

Jess